

A photograph of Elaine Beecham, owner of Sawmill Family Restaurant, sitting in a wooden rocking chair on a porch. She is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. The background shows a wooden building and a red car parked outside.

South Mississippi Regional Center SOUNDINGS

Embraced By The Community

ELAINE BEECHAM, OWNER
SAWMILL FAMILY RESTAURANT
WIGGINS, MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi Department of Mental Health and the South Mississippi Regional Center recruit, employ and promote qualified employees and applicants without regard to race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or disability.

The Mississippi Department of Mental Health/Bureau of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 which provides a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against people with disabilities.

Soundings is the recorder of SMRC's progress in meeting the comprehensive needs of citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities who reside in the six southernmost counties of Mississippi.

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South Mississippi Regional Center supports Mississippians with intellectual and developmental disabilities, using a person-centered approach, by promoting active partnerships to enhance each person's quality of life and independence through choices of living, working and learning.

SMRC CORE VALUES

Commitment
Respect
Responsibility
Communication
Cooperative Effort
Continuous Learning

2020 Edition

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Lori V. Brown, M.S., NHA

Program Director, South Mississippi Regional Center

I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter as much as our Editorial Board enjoyed putting it together. SMRC relies heavily on our volunteers and partnerships within the local community. In 2019, we were able to enjoy many encounters with our established partners, as well as establish some new ones. You will find some of these encounters highlighted in this edition. The year 2020 will bring change to our agency as we begin the year minus some tried and true employees. David Shumate, Dr. Bryant McCrary, and Judy Rowe are just three long-standing employees we will dearly miss as they retire from service at the end of 2019. Leadership changes within the Board of Mental Health and a recent special appointment of Board member Dr. Sampat Shivangi are also highlighted. Our workforce is the heartbeat of our agency and we have many dedicated employees. We share some of their recent accomplishments. I personally thank you for your continued support of SMRC and the people served through our programs.



SMRC'S EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Brittney Clay has been employed with SMRC since 2016 and currently works at Gautier Community Homes. She is well respected by her co-workers and those we serve, which is due in great part to the fact that she treats others with respect. Brittney encourages those around her. She is someone who is asked to do a task when the supervisor needs to know that it will be done quickly and correctly. Being self-motivated, she looks for tasks to complete rather than waiting for someone to ask her to do something. Brittney communicates well with her co-workers and the individuals we serve. She is dependable and is an employee a supervisor can depend on to follow policies. Brittney represents SMRC's core values.



BOARD OF MENTAL HEALTH MEMBER DR. SAMPAT SHIVANGI JOINS SAMHSA NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Mississippi Board of Mental Health member Dr. Sampat Shivangi has accepted an invitation from the United States Department of Health and Human Services to serve on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services National Advisory Council.

Dr. Shivangi serves on the Board of Mental Health in the role of the medical physician representative. First appointed by Gov. Haley Barbour in 2009, he has served as both Chair and Vice Chair during his tenure on the board. He was reappointed to the Board of Mental Health in 2016 by Gov. Phil Bryant.

His appointment to the National Advisory Council is for the term beginning immediately and ending on July 30, 2023.



"I am honoured that the President Donald Trump Administration and the US Secretary of Health and Human Services, Alex M Azar II, have appointed me to the post to serve on the Center for Mental Health Services National Advisory Council for a four year term," Dr. Shivangi said.

Dr. Shivangi is the past president elect of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin. He is the founding president of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin in Mississippi and is the past president and chair of the India Association of Mississippi.

In addition to his service on the Mississippi Board of Mental Health, he has served on the Mississippi Board of Health and as an adviser to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

THE MISSISSIPPI BOARD OF MENTAL HEALTH



Dr. Montgomery

The Mississippi Board of Mental Health has one new member, and a new chair and vice chair have been named for the 2019-2020 year that began July 1, 2019.

Dr. John Montgomery of Ocean Springs serves as the Chair of the Board of Mental Health and Dr. Manda Griffin of Houlka serves as Vice Chair. Also joining the board is Dr. Alyssa Killebrew of Madison, who has been appointed for a seven-year term.



Dr. Killebrew



Dr. Griffin

Dr. Killebrew is a clinical psychologist in private practice who has worked at Life Help Region 6 Community Mental Health Center and previously served as Mental Health Director of the Youthful Offender Unit in the Mississippi Department of Corrections. Dr. Killebrew was appointed to serve as the Third Congressional District representative.

Embraced by

THE BEECHAMS

Glenda McMillon, Client Services Director

On October 23, 2019, Sherwood and Elaine Beecham, owners of the Sawmill Family Restaurant in Wiggins, opened their doors as hosts to the people served through SMRC's Wiggins Community Home program. It was a perfect night for such a festive event. The Beechams rolled out the red carpet and planned a fantastic event. In addition to serving a delicious southern style meal, they arranged for SMRC Wiggins Community Home Director, Nina Stevison, to receive a generous donation from the Knights of Columbus, Council #11654, of which Mr. Beecham is the Grand Knight. Additionally, Chelsea Hammond of the Wiggins branch of Keesler Federal Credit Union presented a donation. Taking it further, the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College dance team, The Perkettes, provided lively entertainment which was thoroughly enjoyed. The audience sat and watched in amazement as the Perkettes enthusiastically displayed their talents.

This is not the first time the Beechams have given generously to the Wiggins program. Over the years, the Sawmill Family Restaurant has served the men and ladies as patrons to their local restaurant, as well as hosted special events. The Beechams shared that their love for helping others, and in particular, people with intellectual disabilities, comes naturally. Mr. Beecham's brother had an intellectual disability and was treated just like everyone else growing up. His mother organized the Jackson County Exceptional School. Mrs. Beecham reports, "Since I was young, I always remember trying to help the less fortunate. The special needs individuals have always tugged at my heart strings. They are so appreciative of the small things we take for granted."

Needless to say, the Wiggins Community Home program has reaped the benefits of the generosity of their community. The Knights of Columbus, Council #11654 have faithfully supported the program for many years. The First Baptist Church Hand Bell Choir and Puppeteers recently provided a performance at the homes. Families First Volunteers, the Stone High School Career program, New Welcome Hill Baptist Church, Wiggins Church of God in Christ, Faith Tabernacle Baptist Church, and Ms. Mississippi Donna Perkins are just some of the volunteers who have given of their time or finances to support the program.

"Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community that you want to live in." - Anonymous

The success of the Wiggins Community Home program is due in part to the efforts of the Beecham family and all the other volunteers who so generously contribute to their community.

JOB CORPS PARTNERSHIP

Denise Christmas-Wallace, Community Relations

South Mississippi Regional Center was honored with the Outstanding Employer Partner Award and the Outstanding Work Based Learning Partner Award on September 20, 2019 at the Gulfport Job Corps Center Business Appreciation Luncheon. SMRC has had the privilege of receiving the Employer Partner Award for the past five years.

Job Corps is a free education and training program that helps young people learn a career, earn a high school diploma or GED, and find and maintain a good job. As a work based learning site, SMRC provides a work experience for the trainees in the Medical Administrative Assistant trade to obtain hands-on training designed to improve the skills and tasks necessary to become employed. SMRC is proud to support Job Corps students through training and employment and looks forward to many years of continued partnership.



Elaine Beecham



MGCCC Perkettes with Larry

the Community

BUDDY BALL FUN

Andrea Riley, Deputy Bureau Director for Client Services

Thanks to Mike and Representative Carolyn Crawford and volunteers like Keith "Sparky" Clark, the Mississippi Gulf Coast Buddy Sports league is thriving on the coast. Created in 2010, the league evolved from the Cal Ripkin Bambino Buddy Ball Program to the successful program offered today. The people served through South Mississippi Regional Center benefit from this program and anxiously await the start every year. The anticipation of team selection and bragging rights accompanied by the fun and excitement of game day provide inclusive fun and socialization between the athletes, buddies, and community partners. The Long Beach program has had up to four teams participating during a season. People served through SMRC's Robert Lott Community program located in Poplarville have also joined in on the fun now played at the Gulfport Sportsplex. The excitement of hearing the bat hit the ball, cheers as players travel around the bases, and finally touching home plate have indeed captured enthusiasm, healthy sportsmanship and socialization like no other for everyone involved. Let's not forget the bragging rights! The most rewarding aspect is to see the buddies partnered and having so much fun in support of a fantastic program fostering inclusion.



VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENT INTERNS

Denise Christmas-Wallace, Community Relations

SMRC welcomes the opportunity to partner with the community. Volunteers and interns enhance the services provided through SMRC and enrich the lives of the people served. Local high school students, civic groups, universities, churches, retirees and community members make up a wonderful group of people who provide these services. Through these partnerships, countless volunteer hours are provided to the program. Department of Mental Health retirees Janet Clark and Sue Manlove volunteer with the blood drive that is held in the gym three times a year, the annual Family and Friends Association spring picnic, Christmas parties, and serve as members of the Family and Friends Association. Each volunteer helps SMRC promote a better understanding of the services offered within the program. Volunteer duties are available to any person 18 years or older. Volunteers under the age of 18 must be part of a community group sponsored by a school, church, civic, or other community organization and accompanied by an adult sponsor.



ASSISTANT DIRECTOR RETIRES

Lori Brown, Program Director

David Shumate retires from SMRC after 25 years of dedicated service. David's influence and guiding hand have had a positive and lasting impact on the agency. David came to SMRC from the field of marketing. He initially served as the Risk Management director and quickly established protocols that had a positive effect on work-related injuries and accidents. In 1998 he was promoted to the position of Human Resources Director where he served for 10 years until his promotion into the Assistant Director. David led by mentoring others and encouraging the employees under his supervision to grow professionally through experience and training. David was known throughout campus by his unique sense of humor and ability to recall important details at a moments' notice. He could often be found visiting with the people we serve in their cottages and making personal connections with staff. We will certainly miss David's daily influence, but know that his legacy lives on through his commitment in support of vulnerable people.



A WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE WITH JUDY ROWE

Glenda McMillon, Client Services Director

Physical Therapist Judy Rowe began her tenure with South Mississippi Regional Center in 1986 while also employed with Memorial Hospital. She came to us as a contract worker all those many years ago

and loved it so much she decided to put down roots. At that time, Occupational Therapy/Physical Therapy (OT/PT) services were part of the HPER (Health, Physical Education and Recreation) department located in the education building. The area was equipped with parallel bars, whirlpools, hot packs, and ultrasound/electric stimulation machines similar to a hospital PT department.

After the Crane Complex buildings were completed, OT/PT moved to the area where Medical Nursing is currently located. They were there until 2005. Nursing had outgrown their office in Bayview Cottage, so they traded spaces the week before Hurricane Katrina. Judy recalls the weeks after Katrina as somewhat of a blur. Trying to find enough gas to get to work and the lack of electricity made it a very difficult time. Judy recalls that many of her co-workers had lost so much, if not everything they had. Thankfully, all of the people we served were safe; and eventually, things got back to the new normal.

While reminiscing, the following are shared memories from Judy. Funniest memory: "The other Memorial Hospital therapists and I decided it would be a good idea to make a video of how to do range of motion. I wish someone could find that video. The star of the show currently resides in Bayview. Every time the therapist narrating said the words, "gently stretch," I started to stretch his hamstring and he would scream (just for laughs). It was pure hilarity!" Saddest memories: "Without a doubt, the saddest memory is of all the individuals who have passed away. Losing people I had known for so many years was like losing a good friend. Also, when I'm asked, "Where were you when ___ happened?" My answer is usually, "at SMRC." It was in the old OT/PT department in the education building when I heard that the space shuttle Challenger exploded. The week before 9/11, Debra McClendon (retired OT/PT supervisor) and I were talking about terrorism while driving to the Gautier Community Homes. Both of us had a weird feeling that something terrible was going to happen. The next Tuesday, we watched the towers fall on the TV in Bayview Cottage. Best memories: "All the wonderful people I have worked with through the years. Many thanks to all of you for taking such good care of the people you serve! It is a huge responsibility and the staff at SMRC does it better than anyone!"

Judy's last day with SMRC was September 30, 2019. She has been a valued employee. Judy graciously served both the campus and community settings, having made an outstanding contribution in the field of physical therapy. Judy is very skilled in her profession and we miss her already. It will be quite a task finding a replacement for her.

DR. BRYANT McCrARY: 38.5 YEARS OF SERVICE

Lori Brown, Program Director



In July of 1981, South Mississippi Regional Center welcomed Dr. Bryant McCrary as Co-Medical Director and on December of 2019 we bade him farewell as he closed a chapter of his service career. Dr. McCrary has been a dedicated and faithful practitioner to the people served through SMRC and their families. Dr. McCrary is well known within the coastal community and around the state, and a highly recommended pediatrician. His legacy is one of service and commitment, particularly in the area of IDD services. On December 10, SMRC held a reception to honor Dr. McCrary for 38.5 years of service. I had the opportunity to speak with Dr. McCrary before his final departure.

Dr. McCrary shared that while in medical school he was excited about the pediatric programs offered at Arkansas Children's Hospital. He saw many interesting cases. During his time as Chief Resident in Pediatrics, he was also the parent of a child with a disability and, although it was a difficult time for him personally, he learned so much. He had great mentors in the field and felt led to general pediatrics, reporting it was more his style. He likes the idea of diagnosing on the front end, which is how the system works in private practice.

Dr. Jim Sheffield, his partner, referred Dr. McCrary to SMRC as he knew the program was looking for a pediatrician. Dr. McCrary actually accepted the job before he moved to Mississippi from Arkansas. The job at SMRC fit well with his interest in genetics and studying syndromes. In private practice, the pediatrician doesn't treat the patient past 21 years of age. Being at SMRC has given Dr. McCrary an opportunity to see the progression of a person and continue to treat them into adulthood.

He shared that he has never dreaded rounding at SMRC. The work has been fun for him. He's been a constant at SMRC as he's seen staff come and go through his years of work and he's enjoyed many memorable moments.

In reflection, Dr. McCrary sees the value of institutional services, but believes the expansion of services in the community has been a good thing for people with IDD. In-home nursing care and speech therapy are just a few examples he mentioned.

Although Dr. McCrary plans to continue work in his private practice along with some of his other specialized work, he and his wife, Margaret, enjoy traveling and birding. He looks forward to trips in which they can engage in birding photography and identification, as well as being able to play golf and read.

STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS



Helen Haas is the new director for the Business Services Department. Ms. Haas has a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting from the University of Southern Mississippi. She has experience working in the private sector, as well as being a self-employed accountant.

Jaime Gauthreaux was selected as the new Education Services Coordinator for Long Beach. Ms. Gauthreaux began her career as a Direct Care Worker in Seagull Cottage in 2010. Within a year, she was promoted to an Alternate Supervisor position. In May of 2013, she accepted a Qualified Intellectual Disabilities Professional position serving in that capacity until 2016 when she transferred to the Quality Services Department. Ms. Gauthreaux has a Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in Nursing.



Janice Jackson was promoted to the position of Unit Manager having previously worked in Support Coordination and Training Resources at SMRC. Ms. Jackson has a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in Psychology, a Master of Science degree from Liberty University in

Counseling, and a Master of Science degree from Capella University in Human Services.

Velesia "Lisa" Sims was promoted to the position of Human Resources Director in March 2019 having previously served as a Unit Manager. Ms. Sims has prior experience at SMRC in Quality Services and Diagnostic Services. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in Social and Rehabilitation Services.



Andrea Riley was selected as the Deputy Bureau Director for Client Services, a supervisory position over the community home programs. Ms. Riley had most recently served as a Unit Manager. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Public Health and a Masters in Public Administration from the American Military University and a Doctoral Ed. Specialist degree Adult Education from Walden University. She is a graduate of the State Executive Development Institute.

Sherry McKenzie was recently promoted to the position of Unit Manager having previously worked in Support Coordination. Ms. McKenzie has a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in Journalism and English, a Master of Science degree from Liberty University in Human Services and Marriage and Family Therapy, and a Master of Science degree from Mississippi State University in Middle Level Education.



Nina Stevison is the new director of the Wiggins Community Homes. Nina has over 15 years of experience working as an advocate for people with IDD. Ms. Stevison previously worked at the Poplarville Community Homes as the Qualified Intellectual Disabilities Professional before accepting the director position in Wiggins. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in Human Performance with an emphasis in Kinesiotherapy.



UPDATES TO THE IDD COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mamie Carlson, Community Services Director

The IDD Community Support Program (1915i) provides services and supports to people with intellectual or developmental disabilities who are at least 18 years of age and have completed their formal education. These services have included day and employment services; however, in the past year, Supported Living services were offered. Supported Living services provide support to people who live independently in their own residence, such as a house or apartment. Up to four hours per day of support can be provided to assist with such tasks as accessing the community, paying bills, shopping for groceries, accessing medical care, and participating in leisure activities.

Currently, eleven people are receiving these supports in their homes in SMRC's service area. With this additional service, some people have been able to move into a more stable and inclusive community setting. They are more independent and have more choices in daily life, employment, social relationships, and community involvement. With the ultimate goal of supporting people according to their individual life priorities, the IDD Community Support Program and Supported Living services are providing opportunities that empower meaningful, quality life choices.

MOVING OUT

Gail Rodgers, Diagnostic Services Director

Have you ever known you wanted something different, but hesitated to make the change? Let me tell you about my friend, Melanie Bonnar. Melanie moved to Seacrest Cottage on the SMRC campus from Ellisville State School in 2000. Melanie has an outgoing personality and enjoys socializing. She is very talkative, inquisitive, and enjoys doing things in the community. For a while, Melanie expressed a desire to live in the community where she would have more



Melanie with her Adopt-a-Friend, Gail

opportunities to participate in vocational skills training and community activities; however, she was always somewhat hesitant to make the move. On February 24, 2019, an opportunity became available at the Gautier Community Homes and she accepted! Since moving almost a year ago, Melanie has expressed joy in having made the difficult decision. She loves the "home-cooked" meals and has even sampled new foods. Melanie particularly enjoys the frequency with which she

is able to go out to eat and go to the movies. She stated "the best thing is that staff do things with you." She has more opportunities to go into the community. Melanie enjoys riding the bus to Biloxi Industries usually four days a week. Melanie has made several new friends and has been able to rekindle an old friendship with a former high school classmate. They are now roommates and best friends. When you visit Gautier Community Homes you will typically

see the two of them sitting side-by-side in the living area, watching a movie. Melanie gives credit to the staff at the community home who made her transition smooth and easy. She also has frequent contact with her adopt-a-friend. Though it was a difficult choice for Melanie to make, she will tell you it was a great choice. Melanie misses her friends in Long Beach very much, but she is happy with her decision.

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Celebrating Our Success

South Mississippi Regional Center honored tenured staff and individuals who retired at the Annual Employee Recognition Ceremony for their commitment to service. Staff were presented with service pins for their length of service to SMRC and retirees were commended for their years of service and dedication.

30 Years

Minh Nguyen

25 years

Janet Jefferson
Ray Gebhart
Catherine Kirksey
Shannon McDonald
Lann Owens
Lisa Rester

20 years

Retha Bosley
Ruthie Bracks
Pammy Buckley
Jane Collins
Stephanie Deitrick

Darline Gaylord

Rosalind Jordan
Gail Rodgers
Susan Williams
Delois Blackwell

15 years

Cathy Forte
Ashley Slusser
Ricki Wade
Virginia Williams
Catherine Stuart

10 Years

Maria Buensuceso
Paula McNeal
Genetha Ray
Mary Throop

5 Years

Theresa Braddock
Shirleen Buxton
Kimberly Despres
Carolyn Franklin
Javonica Keller
Sonia Miller
Ryan Morvant
Alicia Nesbit
Andrea Riley
Charlotte Robinson
Marie Sheppard
Sharon Wells
Shawanda White
Salena Williams

Retirees

Jennifer Bond
Maria Buensuceso
Consuella Gillum
Janet Jefferson
Shannon McDonald
Minh Nguyen
Mary Reynolds
Teresa Robinson
Toreen Scott
Lynne Smith
Renee Triplett
James Tucker